

CREATING A FIRST-EVER RURAL HEALTH CLINIC ON ANDERSON ISLAND

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Established as a nonprofit organization in October 2022, Anderson Island Healthcare Advocates (dba Anderson Island Health or AIH) is dedicated to improving healthcare access for our rural community on Anderson Island. Our mission is **“to provide compassionate, accessible, whole-person health and wellness services on Anderson Island. We are dedicated to improving quality of life by delivering exceptional primary care, advancing optimal health outcomes, and fostering community engagement.”** This mission addresses the critical healthcare gap faced by the island's population, ensuring all residents (and visitors) of our beloved island have direct access to quality medical services without having to leave the island for simple lab tests, medical check-ups, or minor urgent care situations. Healthcare access on the island would reduce the use of the ferry system and save money for the County and island residents.

AIH Vision

Promoting a healthy and thriving community by empowering individuals to be their best selves.

Since our founding, we've faced zoning challenges on Anderson Island and have been working with Pierce County Council Chair Jani Hitchen (District 6) to align the Anderson Island Community Plan with the 2025 Pierce County Comprehensive Plan.

A critical step in establishing the first-ever clinic on Anderson Island is to braid funding from private and public sources. We are just starting that process now.

ABOUT ANDERSON ISLAND

Anderson Island is a small, close-knit community in Pierce County accessible only by ferry, with approximately 1,500 year-round residents, with an average age of 61 according to the 2020 census. Basic healthcare services—labs, pharmacy, minor urgent care such as sutures—require travel to the mainland via a ferry system that is expensive, time consuming, and at times, unreliable. Access to essential healthcare services is a critical issue for island residents because the only option currently is the emergency medical transport provided by Anderson Island Fire Department. Recognizing this gap, local volunteers formed Anderson Island Health to pursue innovative solutions, ranging from nurse visits to exploring on-island preventive care initiatives. We are actively building capacity through potential partnerships and grants.

OBJECTIVES

This clinic will function as a vital healthcare hub, serving the island's growing population, especially our seniors. We strive to achieve the following objectives.

- Establish a healthcare clinic that offers primary care and same day walk-in services.
- Provide accessible healthcare services to residents and visitors, regardless of their socio-economic background. More than 20% of the island's population is living below the federal poverty line.
- Improve overall community health by focusing on preventive care, mental health, and health education.
- Collaborate with local healthcare professionals to ensure high-quality medical care is delivered.
- Enhance the island's healthcare infrastructure and contribute to its development.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Based on the 2020 Census, the island's population of permanent residents is growing at a clip pace. In 2023, roughly 100 permit requests were submitted to build new homes on the island. Anecdotally, remote work has also increased the number of younger families moving to the island. And the lack of a medical facility poses significant challenges for people who must manage their chronic diseases. Residents either delay care or must travel to the mainland via the ferry system, even for simple lab tests and prescription needs.

This past summer, AIH conducted a survey to gather information on healthcare needs and barriers. In all, **262** households responded, representing a total of **570** individuals, **89%** of whom are year-round residents. This was a superb response and represents roughly 40% of the year-round residents. Most households (88%) agreed with the statement that having healthcare services on the island is important to the future of Anderson Island.

What else did we learn?

To keep this simple, we've included the top responses to each question, although *all* answers do provide valuable information. Note that the percentages refer to the total of households (262) and more than one option could be selected for some questions.

1. What type of healthcare services do you or a household member currently use most often?
 - Primary care: **84%**
 - Lab work: **57%**
 - Pharmacy: **57%**
 - Dental Care: **50%**
 - Urgent care: **49%**
2. How often do you go off island for health-related visits?
 - A few times a year: **42%**
 - A few times a month: **38%**
 - Daily or a few times a week: **8%**
3. Do you or a household member have limitations that prevent you from seeking healthcare off the island?
 - Yes, **42%**
 - Time: 22%
 - Difficulty getting a doctor on the mainland: 13%
 - Financial: 10%
 - Transport: 9%
 - Mobility: 9%
 - No, **58%**
4. Is traveling to the mainland for healthcare burdensome?
 - Yes: **72%**
 - Extremely or very burdensome: 16%
 - Somewhat: 24%
 - Slightly: 32%
 - Not burdensome: **23%**
 - No response or part-time resident: **5%**

5. If AIH were to establish healthcare services on the island, how likely are you to use any of the following:
 - Walk in/First Aid: **81%**
 - Basic Primary Care: **67%**
 - Lab work/Diagnostics: **59%**
 - Pharmacy: **53%**
6. Would you be open to seeing a provider on the island for basic healthcare or comprehensive first aid, even if you currently have a trusted provider on the mainland?
 - Yes, I would be willing to switch to an island provider: **45%**
 - Maybe, if I can keep my provider on the mainland: **44%**
 - No, I prefer to stick with my provider on the mainland: **10%**
7. Other notable findings:
 - Approximately **72%** of households in the survey had a member who had at least one “telehealth” (video or phone call) visit in the past year.
 - **2%** of households in the survey utilized EMS/EMT services on the island in the past year.
 - **62.7%** of households would be willing to vote on a levy/bond to support the clinic.

What's Next?

Building on this strong community feedback, the AIH board is moving quickly to explore a mobile healthcare unit as the next step in making this vision a reality. Concurrently, thanks to recent actions by the Pierce County Council, an amendment to the 2025 Comprehensive Plan update would allow mobile medical services to operate in all zones as an accessory use to existing civic and community buildings in rural areas – a perfect fit for our island. This amendment, when adopted, will make it easier to bring healthcare directly to our community.

IMPLEMENTATION PLAN – A PHASED APPROACH

Phase 1: Assess Community Needs – **COMPLETED**

- Conduct a Needs Assessment: Document the types of healthcare services residents require (e.g. urgent care, primary care, mental health, telehealth, etc.).
- Engage the Community: Host forums to gain support and gather responses.

Phase 2: Foundation & Immediate Access (0–6 Months) – **IN PROCESS**

- Continue with Share and Care Access
 - Monthly blood pressure/check-in events at the community center.
 - Partner with a regional provider (e.g., SeaMar, Community Health Care, Catholic Community Services, Dispatch Health, Peninsula Community Health Services).
- Coordinate with EMTs for Wellness Visits
 - Begin informal community paramedicine or continue with volunteer health checks for seniors.
- Community Survey & Outreach
 - Use survey data to demonstrate need and seek funding.
- Secure Land & Zoning Approval
 - Work with Pierce County on zoning or reclassification, and apply for a Conditional Use Permit (see support letter from AICAB attached).

Phase 3: Mobile & Rotating Care Model (6–18 Months)

- Fundraise for capital
 - Initiate a capital campaign alongside grant applications (USDA, HRSA, RHTP, local donors).

- Fundraise \$350,000 of capital funds to acquire a pre-owned vehicle that will be converted to a medical clinic or purchase a brand-new buildout, pay for any interior/exterior buildout/refurbishing and equipment requirements, along with additional cost items such as exterior graphics and delivery of the vehicle to the island.
- Launch mobile clinic for islanders and visitors
 - The mobile clinic includes basic exam rooms, intake station, and lab space. This vehicle can be permanently parked at the community center, fire station, or a parks-owned building.
- Offer primary care + walk-in, and mental health services
 - Provide full spectrum primary care by bringing in a primary care provider 3 days a week to start, to deliver preventive health screenings, chronic disease management and referral to other community services off island.
 - Services include:
 - Acute illness/infection
 - Chronic disease/blood pressure checks/ diabetes screenings
 - Immunizations, flu shots
 - Preventive services/wellness visits
 - Basic lab work
 - First dose pill pack
 - Sprains and fractures — If casting or imaging (X-ray/CT/MRI) is required, refer to a brick-and-mortar facility on the mainland*
 - At a future date, preventive and routine dental services can be added along with a behavioral health provider/counselor

**Visits may be subject to a referral to a specialist on the mainland.*

- Host visiting provider days
 - Use the mobile clinic as a hub to host specialty providers, such as a dentist twice a month, cardiologist once a month, and naturopaths biweekly
- Hire permanent staff & providers
 - Primary care provider, behavioral health counselor, a nurse, and a clinic coordinator to schedule appointments, transportation, referrals, and provider logistics.

Phase 4: Expand Partnerships (18–36 Months)

- Partner with the local EMS to have a PA/ARNP go out on calls, similar to Mason County's Integrated Mobile Health Model. This collaboration with EMS personnel on **preventive visits** or transitional care check-ins helps to reduce unnecessary emergency calls or hospital readmissions.
- Collaborate with the Fire Department, Anderson Island Historical Society, Parks District, the Riviera Community Club, and other key organizations to spread health-related information.

SUSTAINABILITY

To ensure the long-term viability of the clinic, we propose the following strategies:

- Work with the state's Primary Care Office to designate AIH as rural health in a shortage area.
- Collaborate with the state and Pierce County government, private donors, and corporate partners to secure funding for capital build-out and future operations.
- Establish contracts with insurance companies to create sustainable revenue streams.
- Implement a fee structure that is affordable for residents while covering operational costs.
- Continuously assess the clinic's impact on the community's health and well-being.
- Hold fundraising events and submit grants to organizations/agencies that support healthcare initiatives in a rural setting.

- Create a **Public Healthcare District** that leverages property tax dollars of Anderson Island to maintain ongoing operational expenses. Voters must pass by a 60% majority. This approach has been successful in other island communities in WA state, e.g., Vashon and Lopez Islands

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **Community-Led:** Every step centers on voices of islanders
- **Sustainable:** Smart growth guided by long-term funding sources (Medicare, levy, insurance)
- **Partner-Focused:** Collaboration with fire, county, and regional provider organizations
- **Accessible:** Care for all, regardless of income, age, or ability to pay

CONCLUSION

The establishment of the first-ever clinic on Anderson Island represents a significant step towards improving the health and well-being of its residents. Through this initiative, AIH is creating a lasting legacy for the community while fostering a healthier and more vibrant island. We welcome the opportunity to discuss this proposal further and collaborate with various partners to make this vision a reality.

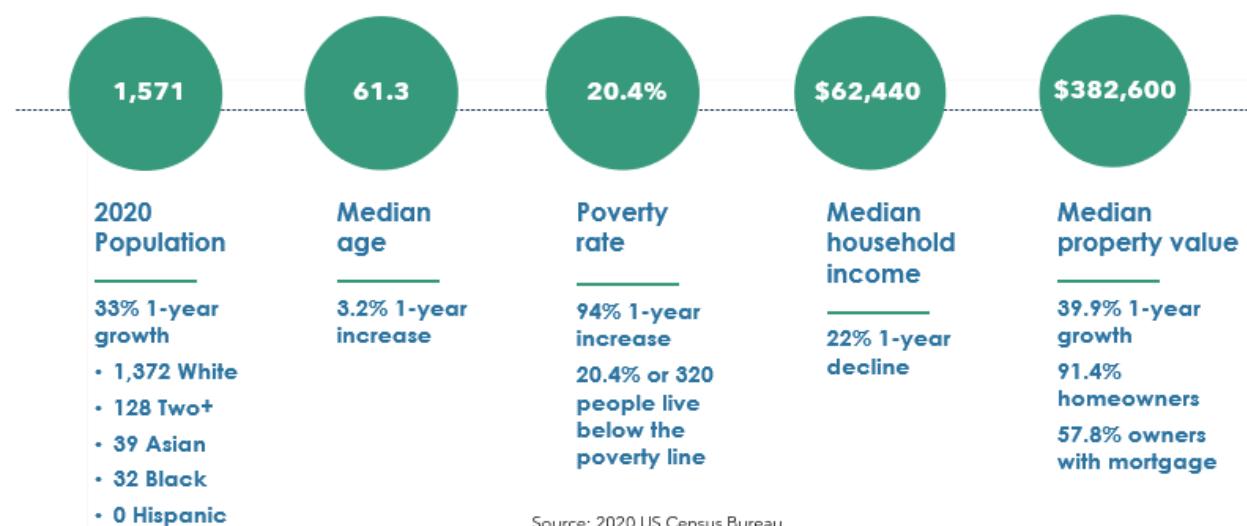
Together, we can build a healthier future for all islanders.

All the best,

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Island Demographics - 2020 Census



Comments from islanders when asked why healthcare services on the island is important to them.

Island is too isolated for urgencies. Minor issues could be more easily taken care of on the island.

The ferry makes Dr visits difficult.

We want to age in place on island. More difficult to get back and forth to the mainland.

Easy to get to and not take so much time (especially prescriptions for sudden illness). However, I figure that I knew of the ferry when I moved here, so I shouldn't really be upset by any inconvenience it causes in going places.

It seems the sooner an illness is treated the less adverse impact it has. I won't travel to town to see a doctor unless I'm dying.

We are happy that you are seeking grants and contacting our legislators!

This would save so much travel time.

Monitoring after hospital stay or after urgent care treatment. Interim care when ferry is not available. On line answers to medical questions related to possible medical problems especially during periods when dr offices are closed. Information about prescription drugs I'm taking or being recommended to take. Elderly or infirm islander's routine check-in to verify ok. No islander calls at appointed time would result in follow up call. The island is aging. Many islanders have no local providers to care for them when they have difficulty caring for themselves. Consider an extended stay or "home for mom" facility on the island sometime in the future. The Lutheran church facility could handle such a need. In-town facilities are extremely expensive. Thanks for attempting these med services here on the island. It would allow seniors to stay longer here on the island as they age.

If and when this service comes to pass, I would want to have a pickup service. By that time, I probably won't be driving and would need transportation to and from the clinic. It would be necessary to employ a FT nurse practitioner in the clinic.

You might reach out to Dr Dunn in Steilacoom, maybe she would be willing to visit occasionally.

We'd love dental and vet service too.

I managed to transition to at home injection of medication. But I imagine it would be difficult for someone living alone.

We need a Nurse practitioner, visiting dental services, we have a lot of visitors and elderly folks. we have construction workers we need someone to stabilize a patient before transport we had drowning people we need someone to coordinate home health care infusion Nurse I myself had to stay in a hospital for six weeks for Vancomycin PIC line therapy a Infusion therapy nurse could of done this at my home.

Need to be able to use our Medicare benefits.

Family members on the mainland, in particular if unable to drive, have used Dispatch Health with positive reviews. Providing mobile/in home visits seems like a reasonable step toward accessing care here in the near future (while clinic, if deemed feasible, is a ways off).

The one experience I had required me to go off Island for medical care. It took two hours or more to figure out how to get off island safely to seek medical attention.

Health care is a vital necessity to island care.

Naturopathic care and acupuncture.

Anything we can get would help as we presently make frequent trips for medical to mainland. thank you I feel this is so needed for our community.

Thank you so much for pursuing this.

I would love classes to help care for my elderly dad with dementia, support services on island would be beneficial as well.

Emergency services are needed.

I will continue to support your efforts by representing you with the county through AICAB.

Great idea! I totally agree we need this especially for seniors.

I believe it would be advantageous to have the EMS Medical Director also be a part of any on-site Island Healthcare facility. Medical protocols could be designed to complement both entities independent and joint operations.

Thanks to all who are working for the benefit of all islanders to bring health care closer to home.

PT is very important because it's usually twice a week, that costs a lot with the ferry.

Thank you for taking this necessary step in securing basic care to an older population on the island.

We've had to use the fire boat on two occasions for urgent care. This is not ideal for anybody, especially in an emergency situation.

We have Kaiser Medicare Advantage and plan to keep it. We would be willing to pay out of pocket for AI healthcare unless you can get approved as a provider.

Nothing specific. Overall, I like the idea of having someone to see, particularly for more minor sprains and strains and injuries that need to be triaged before going to the mainland.

Hoping for forward movement with healthcare on the island.